

# Commandant's Note

MAJOR GENERAL WALTER WOJDAKOWSKI

## GUNNERY TRAINING: THE KEY TO TOTAL WEAPON SYSTEM PROFICIENCY

Today's contemporary operational environment (COE) is fast-paced and unforgiving. As a brigade combat team closes with the enemy and brings its firepower to bear, leaders must focus on hitting enemy targets while avoiding fratricide and limiting unnecessary collateral damage. The techniques of fire distribution and knowledge of combat identification that our Soldiers learn and apply are useful in doing this successfully. The gunnery proficiency and the tactical skills Soldiers learn in our service schools and reinforce at home station, ensure we can better destroy the enemy's will to resist while they shoot, maneuver, and survive in the COE. Based on the dynamic changes on the battlefield and after coordination with the Chief of Armor, we are changing our approach to Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT) gunnery. In this Commandant's Note I will discuss some of the measures we have undertaken to improve gunnery, and which are outlined in the new Draft FM 3-20.21, *Combined Arms Weapons Proficiency for the Heavy Brigade Combat Team*.

The U.S. Army Infantry School (USAIS) focuses on supporting the Army's and the Infantry's training requirements. Weapons training and proficiency remain top priorities as we prepare to stand up the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning. We are working closely with the Armor Center to make sure our tankers and infantrymen receive the best training possible. One initiative in that direction is the formation of an HBCT working group staffed by the Stryker/Bradley Proponent Office at Fort Benning and the Gunnery Doctrine Branch at Fort Knox. One of their products is a set of comprehensive FMs for the gunnery training of all Soldiers within a BCT. One of these, FM 3-20.21, builds upon the gunnery manuals for crews of Abrams tanks, as well as those for gunners in Bradley and Cavalry Fighting Vehicles. This is designed to standardize training and evaluation standards for all elements within a BCT. This FM discusses in detail vehicle and ammunition characteristics, training devices, gunnery training programs, range operations, and the engagement process. It also deals extensively with squad and crew gunnery and evaluation, advanced collective gunnery training, and Abrams and Bradley Fighting Vehicle live-fire preparation. The HBCT gunnery manual will provide a comprehensive training strategy for commanders and complements the training received by Soldiers and crew members who are returning to their units from training, or who are joining the unit for the first time.

Our functional weapons training is conducted by experienced instructors, many of whom are recent combat veterans. We have

modified the resident courses, in some cases shortening them by refining tasks to be accomplished and conducting evening and weekend training wherever possible. This means that

Soldiers are still trained to standard, but with a shorter time away from home station. All USAIS weapons training courses — from small arms to Stryker and Bradley gunnery — are now exportable to units. The Infantry School has trained and staffed mobile training teams (MTT) to deliver training to units when and where they need it. While it may be difficult to replicate the experience, environment, and resources of institutional training, the MTT offers units an option with greater flexibility to support their training needs. MTT scheduling takes place six months prior to execution, with initial coordination through USAIS G-3 and a formal request through FORSCOM to TRADOC. Commanders may also schedule Soldier and leader training through the Army Training Requirement and Resource System or coordinate to schedule or block a functional course to provide focused and resourced instruction for units. The Infantry School also offers weapons training on a menu basis, depending on a unit's training requirements. USAIS will work with units to support their training needs. In the more technically demanding courses such as Master Gunner, units may coordinate for USAIS master gunner training support to develop home station master gunner training and unit Sabot academy training. Our goal is to help units train Soldiers to succeed in training, and in combat. We are actively working with TRADOC and FORSCOM to prioritize the demands and resources needed for infantry weapons training. The fundamental changes we have made to our functional training courses allows the Infantry School to better support unit weapons training. This is essential if we are going to meet Army Force Generation unit training standards.

We are a nation at war, and our Army must be able to strike swiftly, deliver the decisive blow at the right time and place, and redeploy safely. The best gift we can offer our Soldiers is tough, realistic training that addresses the demands and challenges they will face in combat. We owe them no less, and we will give them no less.

Follow me!

